



To: **Joint Committee on Environment**
Legislative Office Building #3200
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Re: **Senate Bill 1148**

Position: **Support**

Date: **March 10, 2023**

Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Environment,

My name is Joseph Bachar, and I am the New England States Coordinator for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF). I respectfully urge you to support Senate Bill 1148 (S.B. 1148) – legislation that would authorize the harvesting of black bears by establishing an annual bear hunt lottery season in Litchfield County. Since the early 2000s, Connecticut has seen a drastic and rapid increase in black bear numbers which has resulted in an increase in human-wildlife conflicts in residential areas – a trend that is likely to continue without a hunting season. Hunting has been, and continues to remain, the most cost effective, socially acceptable method of population management. By authorizing a regulated hunting season, Connecticut will be bolstering contributions to the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF), reinstating a powerful and effective tool that the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) can utilize for managing the black bear population, and likely reducing human-wildlife conflicts. **For these reasons, we urge you to support S.B. 1148.**

Founded in 1989, CSF is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

For more than 85 years, sportsmen and women have been the primary funders of state-level conservation efforts in this state and are thus an important constituency that provides significant benefits for all Connecticut residents. In 2021 alone, Connecticut's sportsmen and women generated over \$15.78 million for conservation through revenue derived from license sales and excise taxes on sporting-related goods in the unique “user pays – public benefits” structure of the ASCF. The funds collected through this program are the lifeblood of state fish and wildlife agencies (such as the DEEP) – the primary managers of our nation's fish and wildlife resources. These conservation dollars fund a variety of efforts including enhanced

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fish and wildlife habitat and populations, recreational access to public and private lands, boat access facilities, wetlands protection and its associated water filtration and flood retention functions, and improved soil and water conservation – all which benefit the public at large, not just sportsmen and women. By reauthorizing a black bear hunting season through a lottery in Litchfield County, sportsmen and women from Connecticut and across the nation will further contribute to the ASCF through their license and equipment purchases if drawn for the season – all of which will further assist the conservation-driven mission of the DEEP.

Serving as a prime case study, New Jersey recently reinstated a black bear season through emergency rulemaking in order to manage its rapidly growing bear population. The topic of hunting black bears in the Garden State is undeniably politically charged, so it was quite the statement when Governor Phil Murphy – who ran for reelection on the platform of ending the bear hunt – was the one who reauthorized it. Governor Murphy originally allowed the state black bear management plan to expire, effectively outlawing all bear hunting, but was forced to admit that *“From the data we have analyzed to the stories we have heard from families across the state, it is clear that New Jersey’s black bear population is growing significantly, and nonlethal bear management strategies alone are not enough to mitigate this trend.”*. Compared to hunting, non-lethal black bear mitigation strategies (i.e., pepper spray, rubber 12 gauge shells, and cracker shells) are ineffective in altering the behavior of nuisance bears and require a significant amount of effort that is publicly funded by state resources¹. Time and time again, it has been proven that through effective conservation efforts, species that may have once been in decline have been able to recover to sustainable populations through legal, regulated hunting programs.

A plethora of conflicts between bears, humans, their pets, and property have been well-documented in the media in Connecticut over the past several years, including bears sleeping under porches, entering homes, and damaging crops and property. It stands to reason that the frequency of these occurrences will continue to increase should Connecticut carry on without a black bear hunting season. Last year, a 10-year-old boy was mauled by a black bear while simply playing in his grandparents’ back yard. One only needs to look to other states to see that without proper management, these incidents will continue to occur and may have tragic and fatal consequences. These potential consequences can be mitigated through taking a proactive approach by supporting S.B. 1148.

In recognition of the many positive bearings recognized above, I urge you to support S.B. 1148. If you have any questions regarding this testimony or any other sportsmen-related topic, please don’t hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,



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¹ Beckmann, Jon P., Carl W. Lackey, and Joel Berger. "Evaluation of deterrent techniques and dogs to alter behavior of “nuisance” black bears." *Wildlife society bulletin* 32.4 (2004): 1141-1146.

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